

## **Volunteering Case Study: Sophie**

Sophie is a 51 year old mother of two grown up children.

She met Rob at the early age of 19. Her parents never approved that relationship. They were traditional and didn't like the idea of Sophie dating someone from another culture and years older than her.

Sophie says that when she first met him, everything was perfect. He was affectionate, considerate and fun to be with. They moved in together shortly after meeting and soon had their first child. However, things started to change. Rob became possessive and aggressive, isolating Sophie from her family and friends and beating her on several occasions.

They were struggling with money and Sophie was forced into prostitution. She would get beaten if she disobeyed and didn't make a certain quota of money a day. She was in and out of prison until the age of 29.

Sophie broke up with Rob more than once and each time stayed in refuge at the Haven Wolverhampton. She was convinced that she could change Rob and he was always sorry for what he did and so she kept on going back, but he never did change. They had their second child and Sophie felt trapped.

Eventually with the help of the Community Team at the Haven, Sophie got an indefinite restraining order against Rob. A few times he got arrested for breaking the order and after he was jailed he stopped.

***'It has been a hard and long journey but thanks to the support of my family, friends and the Haven I have finally managed to get him out of my life from him and start living my life at the age of 40'.***

Sophie had no qualifications and lacked a lot of self-confidence. She found it hard to find a job. She was on Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) for many years until she was referred by the job centre to complete a 4 weeks mandatory work activity programme at The Haven Enterprise Charity Shops in summer 2013 at the age of 50.

***'I was very happy when I heard about it. I was excited about having my first work experience and give something back to The Haven after the help they gave me, and support them against domestic violence, but at the same time, I was very nervous'.***

Sophie was very nervous, but her manager and other volunteers were very friendly towards her and made her feel part of the team immediately. She was trained in customer service, vintage fashion and in all areas that running a charity business involve. The experience helped her gain her confidence and talk to customers. She decided to carry on as a volunteer after the work placement ended. Soon she was given more responsibilities. Sophie started opening and closing the shop, cashing up at the end of the day, assisting with customers and organising promotional events.

After 7 months volunteering, Sophie started to believe in herself again and she applied for a position as a support worker in the refuge. She got the job and couldn't believe that someone had given her a chance in life after all the years that had passed.

***'I would like to thank The Haven Enterprise team for their friendship and support. Working at both shops, THE clothesline and THE Vintage Co. has been a very valuable experience and has changed my life. I am sure if I had not volunteered at The Haven and learnt new skills, I would probably be still on JSA and I wouldn't have rebuilt my confidence.***

***After all the bad things I have experienced in my life, I have finally been able to turn my life around. I couldn't be happier and I am so grateful to all people believed in me and gave me an opportunity'.***